

The Socialist People's Party, a member of the governing coalition, left the government in January in protest over the sale of 19 percent of the stock in the state-owned company DONG Energy to the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs. Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt's minority government remained in power through 2014 despite the loss of the Socialist People's Party's 12 seats.

Unprecedented numbers of asylum seekers, mostly from Syria, further strained the resources and capacity of Denmark, which has some of the toughest immigration laws in the European Union (EU). The Euroskeptic and anti-immigration Danish People's Party made the biggest gains in the European Parliament elections in May, with nearly 27 percent of the Danish vote.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 40 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

The current constitution, adopted in 1953, established a single-chamber parliament (the Folketing) and retained a monarch, currently Queen Margrethe II, with mostly ceremonial duties. The parliament's 179 representatives are elected at least once every four years through a system of modified proportional representation. The monarch chooses the prime minister, usually the leader of the majority party or government coalition.

Parliamentary elections in 2011 led to a change of government, with Thorning-Schmidt leading the Social Democratic Party to power after forming a coalition with the Social Liberal Party, the Socialist People's Party, and the Red-Green Party. Although Thorning-Schmidt's coalition was able to narrowly defeat Rasmussen's center-right coalition, the Social Democratic Party itself suffered its worst electoral result since 1903 and won fewer seats in Parliament than Rasmussen's Liberal Party. As a result of the election, Thorning-Schmidt became Denmark's first female prime minister. The departure of the Socialist People's Party in January 2014 left the center-left government coalition weaker.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 16 / 16

Numerous political parties compete in Denmark. Danish governments most often control a minority of seats in the parliament, ruling with the aid of one or more supporting parties. Since 1909, no single party has held a majority of seats, helping to create a tradition of compromise.

Although postwar Danish politics were dominated by the Social Democratic Party, a right-wing coalition led by the Liberal Party won control of the legislature in 2011 by pledging to reduce immigration and lower taxes. The Social Democrats, historically anchored in the working class, have lost their once-dominant position in Danish politics. Many of their core positions on social services and an expansive public sector have been adopted by parties across the spectrum. The Liberal Party has experienced a similar dynamic, with their positions on the importance of economic competitiveness spreading to the Social Democrats and other parties. The differences between the two major parties are thus variations of degree and emphasis, rather than deeply held ideological distinctions.

The Danish People's Party gained a major victory by supporting Fogh Rasmussen's Liberal-Conservative minority government from 2001 to 2011.

The territories of Greenland and the Faroe Islands each have two representatives in the Folketing. They also have their own elected institutions, which have power over almost all areas of governance, except foreign and financial policy. In 2009, Greenland passed the Self-Government Act, which gave it greater control over government functions, including its security apparatus and judicial system. Snap legislative elections were called in Greenland for November 2014, after the Social Democratic government lost its majority due to an embezzlement scandal involving Greenland's prime minister, Aleqa Hammond. Despite the scandal, Hammond's Siumut party retained enough seats in the elections to lead the government, forming a center-left coalition.

C. Functioning of Government: 12 / 12

Levels of corruption are generally very low in Denmark, which was ranked 1 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index. A final report on the so-called Taxgate scandal was released in October 2014. The case involved leaked information regarding a 2010 tax audit of Thorning-Schmidt, who was an opposition leader at the time. The leak had occurred just one week before the 2011 general election and had allegedly been carried out by Thorning-Schmidt's political opponents. Thorning-Schmidt was found not to have violated any tax laws, but the final report was criticized for not reaching any clear conclusion about the origin of the leak.

Civil Liberties: 58 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 16 / 16

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression. The media reflect a wide variety of political opinions and are frequently critical of the government. The state finances radio and television broadcasting, but state-owned television companies have independent editorial boards. Independent radio stations are permitted but tightly regulated. Access to the internet is not restricted, and Denmark's internet penetration rate is among the highest in the world.

Since the 2005 publication of controversial cartoons by the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* depicting the prophet Muhammad, Denmark has experienced a series of attempted terrorist attacks. In 2013, controversial public intellectual and journalist Lars Hedegaard—an outspoken supporter of the publication of the cartoons and a critic of Muslim immigration and integration—survived an assassination attempt in his home. The presumed assailant was arrested in Turkey in April 2014 but released by Turkish authorities in October as part of an alleged prisoner swap with the militant group Islamic State (IS), eliciting criticism from Danish authorities.

In 2010, following complaints from the Turkish ambassador to Denmark, the Danish attorney general charged the Danish-based, Kurdish-language satellite television station Roj TV with promoting the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which the EU and the United States consider a terrorist organization. The station declared bankruptcy in 2013. The Supreme Court upheld the ruling against Roj TV in February 2014, although the station's former director announced plans to submit a challenge at the European Court of Human Rights. The station was the first outlet in Denmark to face prosecution for promoting terrorism.

Freedom of worship is legally protected. However, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is subsidized by the government as the official state religion. The faith is taught in public schools, though students may withdraw from religious classes with parental consent. Denmark denies religious worker visas, thereby restricting access to missionaries entering the country from abroad. There are no official updated numbers for registered anti-Semitic hate crimes due to the Danish registration procedure; however, the country's Jewish community reported an increase in anti-Semitic harassment and attacks in 2014.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 12 / 12

The constitution provides for freedoms of assembly and association. Demonstrations in 2014 were peaceful. Civil society is vibrant, and workers are free to organize. The labor market is mainly regulated by agreements between employers' and employees' organizations. There were no major strikes in 2014.

F. Rule of Law: 15 / 16

The judiciary is independent, and citizens enjoy full due-process rights. The court system consists of 100 local courts, two high courts, and the 15-member Supreme Court, with judges appointed by the monarch on the government's recommendation. Prisons generally meet international standards.

Immigration and asylum remained divisive issues in 2014. Denmark continues to have some of the harshest immigration laws in Europe, although less restrictive laws regarding family reunification and permanent residency came into effect in 2012. More than 14,000 asylum seekers reached Denmark in 2014, four times the number in 2009. The increase has acutely strained the capacity of the Danish Immigration Service and created housing shortages. In September, the government announced changes to its immigration policy, proposing a temporary residence permit for asylum seekers who are fleeing violent conflict but are not personally persecuted; the permits would be valid for one year, with a possibility of renewal. Holders of such permits would not be entitled to family reunification in the first year of residence. Criticism from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) led Danish authorities to amend the proposal to allow reunification of asylum seekers with their children. The proposal was pending at year's end.

Discrimination, including based on gender identity or sexual orientation, is prohibited by law. A new gender recognition law came into effect in September, eliminating previous legislation that had required transgender persons to undergo psychiatric evaluation and sterilization—either by hormone therapy or surgery—when obtaining legal documents reflecting their new gender. While progressive, the law mandates a six-month waiting period, after which applicants must reconfirm their decision. Citizens must be over the age of 18 to apply for a legal change in gender identity.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 15 / 16

Freedom of movement is protected by law and generally respected by the government, and citizens are free to choose their own residence, employment, and institution of higher education. Private business activity is free from undue influence by government officials or nonstate actors.

Women enjoy equal rights in Denmark and represent half of the workforce. However, disparities have been

reported in the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

In 1989, Denmark became the first country in the world to adopt same-sex civil unions, and in 2012, the parliament overwhelmingly passed same-sex marriage legislation enabling couples to wed in the Lutheran state church of their choosing. Priests are not obligated to officiate but must find a colleague who will.

Denmark is a destination and transit point for women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Following the 2003 adoption of legislation that defined and criminalized such trafficking, the government began working regularly with nongovernmental organizations in their trafficking-prevention campaigns.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)